

A life well-lived



Irene Meeuwissen OAM was born in Yorkshire in 1926. Her first job was in the Buying Department of Leyland Motors, and after twelve months she moved to the Technical Division, where all the records of the company were kept. Realising that she needed some skills in this area she joined the Library Association and started to study by correspondence. In 1948 Irene went to the Birmingham Library Summer School, and as she said 'It opened my eyes to possibilities and when at the end of the year an opening came for an assistant at the Motor Industry Association in London, I applied.'

In 1955 Irene arrived in Australia with her husband Peter, and in March 1969 she commenced work as librarian at Dandenong Girls High School. She says 'By 1972 I realised to do the job properly I needed to have training in education and worked part-time and studied part-time for a year to get accreditation as a teacher-librarian. I spent many happy years at what is now Cleland Secondary College retiring in 1991 on my birthday.'

Irene was an active and committed librarian who took great pride in her profession. In 1975 she revived the Victorian group of the Library Association of Australia, Schools Libraries Section and was appointed honorary secretary. She initiated two groups in the south-east — in 1977 she was deputy chair and then chair of the Dandenong Cluster of Libraries, and in 1982 she set up another group, the Southern Region ReSOURCE sharing group, a co-operative network of over 560 schools and all public libraries in the Melbourne Southern Metropolitan Region. It was through this group that I met Irene, and it was because of her enthusiasm and professionalism that the group continued as long and productively as it did. The group produced several publications, and was a significant networking opportunity for school and public librarians. She was a great mentor for younger members of the profession, and a fine role model.

From 1982 to 1985 she was president of the Library Association of Australia, School Libraries Section, and national president from 1985 to 1986.

In 1985 she promoted the establishment of the Young Australia's Best Book Awards (YABBA) and was honorary secretary. She served as a member of the committee until 1999. In 1992 she was awarded a Letter of Recognition by ALIA, a very pleasant summer evening that I remember, held at the LaTrobe University campus at Abbotsford.

Irene was indefatigable. Her involvement with many community groups and in particular her thirty years of service to the Cystic Fibrosis Society was recognised this year with the awarding of the Order of Australia. Irene died on 14 May. Her contribution to librarianship in Victoria has been significant and generous. It was indeed a life well-lived.

Irene is survived by her husband Peter, son Bob and daughter Jane. Her daughter Sue predeceased her in 2000.

*Christine Mackenzie,
Yarra Plenty Regional Library*



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